

Mentorship as an Initial Teacher Preparation Programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana: Views of Mentees from OLA College of Education, Cape Coast, Ghana

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Abstract : *The study was to find out the perception of mentees from OLA College of Education on mentorship programme as an initial teacher preparation in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The purposive sampling was used to select 120 mentees from OLA College of Education who were on their internship in the Mfantseman Municipality and Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District, all in the Central Region of Ghana. The major findings were that the mentorship programme was of great benefit as an initial teacher preparation programme since mentees and teachers of the partnership schools gained a lot of knowledge, skills, and experience in the teaching and learning process. The challenges faced by the mentees include poor interpersonal relationship with some members of the community. Respondents rated the mentorship programme as very good and were of the view that it should be continued even though some improvements should be made. Among the recommendations are that series of workshops should be organized for headteachers and teachers of partner schools on their roles in the mentorship programme, so that mentees are not overburdened.*

Key Words : Mentorship, mentoring, mentor, mentee, link tutor, and teacher preparation

1. Introduction

The importance of education in the development of every nation cannot be overemphasized. Education, according to Chauhan (1994) is the development of desirable habits, skills, and attitudes through shaping or modification of behavior of the individual for adequate adjustment in the society. Quality education is therefore an essential factor in the development of every nation. This suggests that for quality education to be achieved, Ghana should have qualified teachers who are physically and psychologically sound, and possess quality knowledge and skills. Koomson, Acheampong and Fobih (1999) as cited in Esia-Donkoh (2008) are of the opinion that teaching as a professional activity involves the facilitation of knowledge and skills to students within the framework of a designed curriculum. To them, the role and

responsibilities of teachers in the educational process is very crucial, essential and urgent since teaching as a professional activity is complex and sophisticated. Thus, teachers are at the centre of attraction in every educational process.

Colleges of Education (formerly Teacher Training Colleges) in Ghana have a huge task of training quality teachers for the basic level of education. It is against this background that the 'IN-IN-OUT' policy was introduced into the initial Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana in 1999. Under this, trainee teachers are given two years of traditional face-to-face teacher education in the Colleges of Education and an additional year of non-residential training. The 'IN-IN-OUT' policy combines practical first hand field experience in teaching in Basic Schools acquired through a full year of school attachment.

An essential aspect of the 'IN-IN-OUT' policy is the

mentorship programme which seeks to ensure that student teachers (mentees) on teaching practice are guided by experienced teachers in the schools to acquire basic competencies and skills for effective teaching. These experienced teachers also act as mentors to pick up innovative ideas and practices from the trainee teacher who has been exposed to theories and practices of teaching from college. According to Adentwi (2002), mentorship programme under the 'IN-IN-OUT' policy of Colleges of Education also ensures constant interaction on both coursework and school experiences among mentees who constitute study circles within the same school. Again, mentees of schools within close proximity, at specified time intervals, hold conferences with their link tutors from their colleges during which they discuss areas of difficulty, share ideas on aspects of their coursework, submit assignments for marking and discuss comments on marked ones. The importance of the mentorship programme in teacher preparation by Colleges of Education cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore prudent that pragmatic steps are taken to improve and sustain the programme.

(1) Statement of the Problem

Literature has shown that mentoring has a great potential in bringing about learning, professional growth, and development for teachers, especially, beginning teachers and teacher trainees. However, one cannot overlook the fact that mentorship programme which forms part of the 'IN-IN-OUT' policy of teacher education in Ghana has been faced with challenges. It is against this background that the study into perception of mentees on mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana is worthwhile.

(2) Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What benefits do mentees of OLA College of Education derive from mentorship programme?
2. What barriers to the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana are perceived by mentees of OLA College of Education?
3. What mentoring activities do mentees of OLA College of Education go through?
4. How do mentees of OLA College of Education evaluate their mentors?
5. How do mentees of OLA College of Education rate the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana?
6. In what ways could mentorship programme in

Colleges of Education in Ghana be improved?

(3) Significance of the Study

Apart from adding to existing body of literature and knowledge, the study will provide a first hand information about the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana which will be of great help to policy makers, college administrators, mentors, mentees, partnership schools and other stakeholders in taking prudent decisions on mentorship programme as an initial teacher preparation in Ghana. The study will also serve as a basis for further research into the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana.

2. Literature Review

Mentoring is a prominent approach used in the teacher professional development in the world including Ghana. Johnson (2002), Portner (2002) and Yost (2002) are of the opinion that among various approaches such as mentoring, coaching and supervision, mentoring seems to be very effective in enhancing teachers' professional development. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) as cited in Duodu (2008) defines mentoring as a relationship in which experienced faculty work with less experienced teachers to stimulate both academic and personal development. In the opinion of Anderson and Shannon (1988), mentoring is a process in which a more skilled or more experienced person (mentor) nurtures someone less skilled or experienced (mentee). This may involve a mentor adopting a variety of roles of modeling, teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counseling, or befriending (Anderson & Shannon, 1988), coaching, supporting, promoting (Lacey, 1999), or even supervising and providing situational leadership (Colwell, 1998) to a mentee for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and or personal development (Colwell, 1998; Peterson & Williams, 1998). Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) indicate that mentoring is a way of revealing the secrets of the teaching profession for others, a process-oriented relationship involving knowledge acquisition, application and critical reflection.

Literature reveals that there seems to be a general acceptance that mentoring yields benefits for all involved parties-the school, mentees and mentors. Smith and Ingersoll (2004), indicate that through mentoring, mentees have opportunities to learn, grow and move along life's professional and psychological pathways. Meyer (2002) posits that mentoring has a great potential of supporting teacher learning because it occurs in direct context of

teaching and learning and provides real learning environments for teachers to develop. Authors, including Hargreaves and Fullan(2000)and Woullard and Coats (2004)opine that mentoring programmes provide structure and support in helping new teachers to learn, thereby promoting a higher level of teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge.

Mentoring faces barriers and problems of potential misuse. Long(1997), in a study concluded that under various conditions, the mentoring relationship can be detrimental to the mentor, mentee or both. Tellez (1992) posits that the first barrier is lack of understanding of the mentoring process such as the role of mentoring, the goal of mentoring and the planning of mentoring process. Johnsrud(1991)in his study found that mentoring was not successful as a result of poor planning. This opinion is shared by Balassa, Bodoczky and Saunders (2003) who indicate that participants in a mentoring programme had strong concerns with institutional and organizational problems inherent in the system of education. Another barrier is the potential lack of skills of mentors. It has been shown through research that most mentors lack formal training in mentoring (Colwell, 1998) . Daresh and Playko (1990) opine that mentorship is a unique role where not every mentor may be suitable. Holloway (2001) as cited in Hoa (2008) also believes that a nurturing mentor is not enough to effectively help novice teachers unless the mentors have been trained on how to support new teachers. From a study, Rowley (1999) as cited in Hoa (2008) reiterates that mentor teachers who have not participated in a quality training programme often display a lack of dedication to the role and responsibilities of mentoring. Also, Gerstein (1985) and Madison, Knight and Watson (1993), in their studies concluded that a breakdown in the mentoring relationship may arise when there is a poor relationship between the mentor and mentee, since the mentoring process involves interpersonal relationship. According to Saban (2002) mentoring requires huge investment of time, money, effort and resources, and further indicates that research has shown that time is a crucial factor for the effectiveness of mentoring.

Kay and Hinds (2002) are of the view that mentors are to help mentees develop teaching skills, give constructive feedback and have more general discussions about teaching with mentees. This means that mentors should be proficient teachers with a strong base of pedagogical knowledge and successful experience. As a

‘nurturing process’, mentoring occurs in a caring and ongoing relationship between more experienced teachers with those who are inexperienced (Colley, 2003) . Sinclair (2003) stresses on the importance of interpersonal and communication skills. Such interpersonal skills according to Kay and Hinds (2002) , and Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992)include ability to motivate, listen, influence, counsel, manage time, teach, demonstrate, guide, coach, serve as a change agent and a companion, and to exhibit trustworthiness. From the foregoing, it could be seen that there is no ideal type of mentor. The presence of a mentor alone is not enough; the mentor’s knowledge and skills of how to mentor are also crucial.

3. Methodology

(1) Research Design

The research design for the study was the descriptive survey. The choice of the descriptive survey was worthwhile because it has an advantage of being used in both small and large population.

(2) Population

The target population of the study consisted of all final year students (mentees) of Colleges of Education in Ghana. However, by the virtue of the large size of the population, OLA College of Education, Cape Coast, which is a female College, was selected as the accessible population for the study.

(3) Sample and Sampling Procedures

One hundred and twenty(120)mentees posted to towns and villages in Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District and Mfantseman Municipality for their internship or ‘OUT’ segment programme were involved in the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to sample all one hundred and fifty final year students who were on the internship programme or ‘OUT’ segment of their training. Research assistants were hired and trained to administer and collect the questionnaire. One hundred and thirty-two(132)respondents returned their questionnaire. Thus, the returning rate was 88.0%. However, twelve(12)respondents did not respond to the items correctly, hence their questionnaires were not used for the analysis. This means that one hundred and twenty(120)respondents were part of the study.

(4) Data Collection Instrument

An adopted questionnaire, modified to suit the setting of the study was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire which was made up of

open and closed ended questions sought to determine the perception of mentees from OLA College of Education, Cape Coast, Ghana, on benefits of the mentorship programme, the challenges or barriers to the programme, mentoring activities mentees go through, how mentors are evaluated by their mentees, how mentees rate mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana, and how the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana could be improved.

4. Findings and Discussions

(1) Analysis and Results

Key to Tables 1 and 2:

SA = Strongly Agree (5), A = Agree (4), SLA = Slightly Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), SD = Strongly Disagree (1), WM = Weighted Mean, St.D = Standard Deviation and I=Interpretation

Interpretation of Weighted Means for Tables 1 and 2:

5 = Strongly Agree, 4-4.9 = Agree, 3-3.9 = Slightly

Agree, 2-2.9 = Disagree and 1-1.9 = Strongly Disagree

Research Question 1: What benefits do mentees of OLA College of Education derive from the mentorship programme?

Apart from slightly agreeing that mentorship programme increases mentees' job satisfaction, the respondents agreed that feeling more confident about professional competence, acquiring more teaching knowledge, skills and experience as well as supporting teacher learning were benefits derived from mentoring. Respondents also agreed that other benefits are improving teaching, increasing teaching efficacy and establishing foundation for career-long profession. Generally, respondents agreed that some benefits are derived from mentoring. This is shown by a mean of means score of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 0.77 from Table 1. This revelation is essential since it can create good reasons for mentees to continue to develop mentoring relationships in their partner schools to serve as an avenue for professional development.

Table 1 Opinion on Benefits of Mentorship Programme

Item	SA	A	SLA	D	SD	WM	St. D	I
I feel more confident about my professional competence	61	50	9	0	0	4.43	0.63	A
I acquire more teaching knowledge	57	40	23	0	0	4.28	0.77	A
I acquire more teaching skills	55	47	18	0	0	4.31	0.72	A
It supports teacher learning	46	43	29	2	0	4.11	0.83	A
I gain more teaching experience	74	36	10	0	0	4.53	0.65	A
It improves teaching	82	21	17	0	0	4.54	0.73	A
It increases teaching efficacy	52	47	21	0	0	4.26	0.74	A
Increases job satisfaction	22	50	33	12	3	3.63	0.98	SLA
Establishes foundation for career-long profession	52	43	21	4	0	4.19	0.84	A

Mean of Means = 4.25 Standard Deviation = 0.77

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Research Question 2: What barriers to the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana are perceived by mentees of OLA College of Education?

It is realized from Table 2 that respondents slightly agreed that lack of awareness of the role of the mentorship programme, lack of resources, inadequate funding and difficulty in dealing with community members are challenges to the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana. This implies that

mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana is faced with some challenges which need to be identified, critically assessed and solutions found to them to help improve on the programme. This buttresses the findings of a study that mentoring was not successful as a result of personal and organizational barriers (Johnsrud, 1991) and strong concerns by participants that organizational problems exist in the present system of education (Balassa, Bodoczky and Saunders, 2003).

Table 2 Barriers to the Mentorship Programme

Item	SA	A	SLA	D	SD	WM	St. D	I
Lack of awareness of the role of mentorship programme	20	30	22	38	10	3.10	1.25	SLA
Mentors' poor skills in mentoring	1	14	26	48	31	2.21	0.99	D
Limited time for mentorship programme	4	21	18	37	40	2.27	1.19	D
Poor planning of the mentorship programme	9	19	44	38	10	2.83	1.04	D
Lack of understanding of the mentorship programme	10	31	22	46	11	2.86	1.15	D
Lack of resources for the mentorship programme	31	45	11	18	15	3.49	1.35	SLA
Lack of access to mentors	14	20	27	33	26	2.69	1.30	D
Inadequate funding	37	31	22	20	10	3.54	1.31	SLA
Unsuccessful matching of mentors and mentees	12	18	5	73	12	2.54	1.17	D
Lack of administrative support	16	14	15	54	21	2.58	1.28	D
Difficulty in dealing with community members	38	30	1	42	9	3.38	1.43	SLA

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Research Question 3: What mentoring activities do mentees of Colleges of Education in Ghana go through?

This question sought to find out the kind of activities that mentees undertake in the course of their mentorship programme and the level of frequency with which these activities are undertaken. This is shown in Table 3.

Key to Table 3:

MF = Most Frequent (5), F = Frequent (4), SF = Slightly Frequent (3), NF = Not Frequent (2), LF = Least Frequent (1), WM = Weighted Mean, St.D = Standard Deviation and I = Interpretation

Interpretation of Weighted Means for Table 3:

5 = Most Frequent, 4-4.9 = Frequent, 3-3.9 = Slightly Frequent, 2-2.9 = Not Frequent and 1-1.9 = Least Frequent

Table 3 Opinion on Mentoring Activities

Item	MF	F	SF	NF	LF	WM	St. D	I
Asking for mentor's advice	23	36	35	18	8	3.40	1.16	SF
Mentor modeling	18	37	30	28	7	3.26	1.15	SF
Sharing experience with mentors	26	24	36	19	15	3.23	1.30	SF
Mentor observing my class	39	30	27	7	17	3.56	1.37	SF
Mentor providing counseling	22	23	31	8	36	2.89	1.48	LF
Mentor providing guidance	27	26	18	12	37	2.95	1.57	LF
Mentor providing training	21	19	36	5	9	2.82	1.48	LF

Mean of Means = 3.16 Standard Deviation = 1.36

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Table 3 depicts respondents' view that guidance, counseling and training are least frequent activities undertaken, while asking for mentors' advice, mentor modeling, sharing experience with mentors and mentors observing mentees' lessons are slightly frequently

used. Mentors observing mentees' class or lessons was the commonest activity (mean score = 3.56, standard deviation = 1.37) and is followed by asking for a mentor's advice (mean score = 3.40, standard deviation = 1.16). From Table 3, the general perception of respondents is

that mentoring activities are slightly frequently used, since a mean of means score of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 1.36 were recorded. This means that whereas some activities are somehow frequently used,

others, such as guidance, counseling and training seem not to occur frequently. This suggests the need for more formalized mentoring activities to develop professional skills and competencies in mentees.

Table 4 Evaluation on Mentors

Item	VG	G	S	P	VP	WM	St. D	I
Mentor's ability to model effective teaching strategies	43	25	29	15	8	3.67	1.27	S
Mentor's ability to work in collaborative manner	37	45	12	10	16	3.64	1.35	S
Mentor's ability to adapt to different situations	38	49	16	9	8	3.83	1.16	S
Mentor's ability to manage time for effective mentoring	28	57	12	13	10	3.67	1.19	S
Mentor's ability to give feedback	35	38	32	13	2	3.76	1.05	S
Mentor's professional competence	44	48	18	10	0	4.05	0.93	G
Mentor's verbal communication	45	40	22	13	0	3.98	1.00	S
Mentor's interpersonal skills	42	42	28	8	0	3.98	0.93	S
Mentor's teaching experience	46	39	17	18	0	3.94	1.06	S
Accessibility of mentor	30	45	34	11	0	3.78	0.93	S

Mean of Means = 3.83 Standard Deviation = 1.09

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

Research Question 4: How do mentees of OLA College of Education in Ghana evaluate their mentors?

Mentorship is a learning relationship between the mentees and mentors, with the mentors as knowledgeable and experienced facilitators. It was therefore essential to find out how mentors are evaluated by their mentees. This is shown by Table 4.

Key to Tables 4 and 5:

VG = Very Good(5), G = Good(4), S = Satisfactory(3), P = Poor (2), VP = Very Poor (1), WM = Weighted Mean, St.D = Standard Deviation and I = Interpretation

Interpretation of Weighted Means for Tables 4 and 5: 5 = Very Good, 4-4.9 = Good, 3-3.9 = Satisfactory, 2-2.9 = Poor and 1-1.9 = Very Poor

From Table 4, respondents found their mentors' ability to model effective teaching strategies, work in collaborative manner, adapt to different situations, manage time for effective mentoring and give feedback to be satisfactory. Again, respondents were of the opinion that their mentors' verbal communication, interpersonal skills and teaching experience were satisfactory. They also had a satisfactory accessibility to their mentors.

The professional competence of mentors was however seen by the respondents as good and it could be

concluded that respondents were satisfied with the professional competence of their mentors. This supports the opinion of Hutto et al (1991) as cited in Sinclair (2003:79) that a mentor should be an experienced, successful and knowledgeable professional who willingly accepts the responsibility of facilitating professional growth and support of a colleague through a mutual beneficial relationship. The mean of means score of 3.83 (standard deviation=1.09) as shown in Table 4 indicates that generally, respondents' evaluation on their mentors was satisfactory.

Research Question 5: How do mentees of OLA College of Education rate the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana?

Among the objectives of the study was determine how the whole mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana is rated by mentees. It is evidenced from Table 5 that 36 (30.0%) of the total respondents were of the view that mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana is very good, 48 (40.0%) indicated that it is good while 29 (24.2%) commented that it is satisfactory. However, seven (5.8%) of the total respondents opined that the programme is poor.

Table 5 Rating of Mentorship Programme

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very good	36	30.0
Good	48	40.0
Satisfactory	29	24.2
Poor	7	5.8
Very poor	0	0.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

When asked whether the mentoring programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana should be maintained, 118 (98.3%) of the total respondents answered in the affirmative and contended that mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana should be maintained even though they admitted there were some challenges.

Research Question 6: In what ways could the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana be improved?

Respondents were expected to suggest ways through which the mentorship programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana could be improved to ensure that the aims, objectives and goals for the use of mentoring as an initial teacher preparation could be achieved. The key suggestions given by the respondents were as follows:

1. Mentees should not be substituted for full time teachers.
2. Teaching and learning materials should be provided to mentees by the partnership schools.
3. Frequent visit to partnership schools by link tutors.
4. Partnership schools and community members should help mentees to locate descent accommodation.
5. Allowances for mentees should be increased since a lot of money is spent on food, teaching learning materials and project work.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed and confirmed findings from other researches that there are a lot of benefits that could be derived from a mentoring process and mentees of OLA College of Education, Cape Coast, Ghana, are no exception. The mentoring process cannot be said to be very smooth without challenges. Some challenges identified by mentees from OLA College of Education, Cape Coast, Ghana, include lack of awareness of the role of the mentorship programme, lack of resources, inadequate funding and difficulty in dealing with

community members. The study also shows that the widely used activity in the mentoring process is observation of mentees' class or lessons by mentors. Even though the mentees found their mentors' work to be satisfactory, they acknowledged that mentors' professional competence was good. Mentees from OLA College of Education opined that the mentorship programme undertaken in Colleges of Education in Ghana was good and almost all of them (98.3%) intimated that the programme should be sustained and maintained.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study and suggestions given by the respondents, the following recommendations are made:

1. Mentors are expected to provide expertise, on-going support as well as opportunities for professional development to enhance the skills and effectiveness of mentees. Again, mentors are expected to have a good knowledge and experience in teaching and display good professional competence, effective communication and interpersonal skills, to aid in sharing their expertise and the nurturing process of training, guidance and counseling. Even though these qualities are essential, they are not alone enough to achieve effective mentorship. The knowledge and skill of mentors in the mentoring process are also crucial. It is therefore recommended that mentors should be given adequate training in the mentorship programme. That is, emphasis should be placed on training of mentors which should include formal training on the goals and objectives of mentoring.
2. Members of communities in which the partnership schools are situated should be given enough education on the mentorship programme to enable them become

- fully aware of the role that they are to play in ensuring that the objectives of the mentorship programme are achieved.
3. Link tutors should regularly visit the partnership schools. This will help them get first hand information on the problems faced by mentors, mentees and the partnership schools so that such problems would be dealt with effectively.
 4. Most mentees find problems in getting accommodation, and apart from buying their own food and other personal items, mentees also buy their own teaching and learning materials. This situation puts a lot pressure on their meager allowance. Partnership schools and community members should therefore provide the needed support to the mentees to motivate them to offer the best of their services to the pupils and the community. The support may be in the form of assisting to locate accommodation and providing some teaching learning materials.
 5. In most partnership schools, mentees seem to be given a lot of teaching periods far beyond what they are expected to do. Most permanent teachers find the presence of mentees as a 'blessing' and as such tend to give all their teaching periods to the mentees. This increases the work load of mentees and puts undue pressure on them. It is therefore important that mentees are made to teach the appropriate number to teaching periods prescribed by the mentorship programme to ensure that their work load is reduced.
 6. Mentees should abide by all rules, agreed principles and code of conduct concerning the mentorship programme. Mentees who violate any of these rules and regulations should be punished in line with the code of ethics and conduct governing the mentorship programme.
 7. Mentors should be motivated enough to ensure that they work effectively and sustain their interest and the programme. Thus, monetary and other forms of motivation, such as awards and recognition should be given to the best mentors.

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要 約

OLA 教員養成大学の実習生によるメンターシッププログラムを検討した。メンターシッププログラムは、実習生と実習校教員が教授および学習過程を通じ多くの知識、技術そして体験を得ているため、大きな効果があった。実習生の直面した課題は地域との人々との人間関係が乏しい等だった。回答者はメンターシッププログラムを高く評価し、改善は必要であるが継続すべきであると考えている。改善点としては、実習生が過大な負担をしないよう、対象校の校長及び教員へのワークショップを持つ必要がある事である。

(教員教育国際協力センター)